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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 003308

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/01/2015

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SUBJECT: INDIA UPBEAT WITH SHEINWALD ON CHINA AND PAKISTAN;
WORRIED ABOUT BANGLADESH; J&K CEASE-FIRE UNLIKELY

Classified By: Polcouns Geoff Pyatt, for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Aside from nuclear issues (septel) UK NSA Sir Nigel Sheinwald's April 25-26 visit to New Delhi stuck to familiar ground, with the PM, NSA Narayanan, and Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran providing an encouraging backdrop for

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the September 7-8 India-EU and India-UK Summits. According to the UK readout, PM Singh stressed his sincerity about making peace with Pakistan, admitted that infiltration had been reduced, but cautioned that the real test would come when the mountain passes open in May. Narayanan said a cease-fire in J&K was "unlikely given previous experiences." Saran reiterated GOI willingness to assist Iraq draft its constitution and to provide training in public administration. On Nepal, Saran was in a wait-and-see mode, while Narayanan said the Maoists had not been weakened at all. Narayanan professed to be more concerned about Bangladesh, commenting that a trilateral US/UK/India approach was even more desirable there because of the possibility of "Talebanization." The PM was pleased about India's progress with Beijing, especially the parameters for resolving their border dispute. The UK PM's September visit to New Delhi will come on the heels of an unprecedented number of visits by almost every UK Cabinet Minister. The GOI noted continuing interest in transit rights though Pakistan to Afghanistan. See septel for Sheinwald's discussions on nuclear energy and proliferation. End Summary.

Upbeat on Pakistan, but Cease-fire &Unlikely"

¶2. (C) Characterizing Sheinwald's discussions on Pakistan as &upbeat,⁸ UK Polcouns Rob Macaire (protect) said the GOI was pleased that Musharraf had acknowledged the public's sentiment for peace in both countries. Sheinwald's interlocutors explained their "people-centered" approach to the Kashmir problem, maintaining that middle class Indian tourists were causing "dramatic changes in the Valley." The PM stressed India's sincerity about making peace with Pakistan, admitted that infiltration had been reduced, but cautioned that the real test would come when the mountain passes open in May. New Delhi promised troop reductions if infiltration decreased. Sheinwald told the PM that HMG continues to press Pakistan to stop its support for terrorism, and that London believes Islamabad has begun to deliver. NSA Narayanan observed that the ISI had taken no steps regarding Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT), while terrorist groups were using new infiltration routes via Nepal, Bangladesh and the sea. Narayanan asserted that human rights violations had decreased in Kashmir, but when Sheinwald asked about prospects for a cease-fire in J&K, the Indian NSA replied that it was "unlikely, given previous experiences."

Interest in Assistance to Iraq, But No New Commitments

¶3. (C) FS Saran reiterated GOI willingness to assist Iraq draft its constitution and to provide training in public administration. Sheinwald welcomed any help New Delhi could offer the UN and expressed the hope that India would become more involved, especially in the South and North where the situation was more secure. Sheinwald also emphasized the importance of sticking to the timetable for installing a permanent government as outlined in the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL). Saran responded that UNSYG Kofi Annan's comments during his concurrent visit to India had implied that the TAL timetable had already been superseded. UK PolCouns added that during a meeting with the High Commission earlier that week, GOI West Asia Envoy Chinmaya Garekhan had offered nothing new about India's position in Iraq.

UK Keen on Trilateral Consultations on Nepal

¶4. (C) Sheinwald appreciated the manner in which India, the UK, and the United States were cooperating on Nepal, but suggested to the GOI that further trilateral consultations would be desirable. Saran was in a wait-and-see mode as to whether the King would allow the State of Emergency to expire on April 30, as scheduled. The FS did not foresee any

significant change in the security situation and predicted that even a strengthened RNA could do no more than hold the line. NSA Narayanan commented that the Maoists had not been weakened at all. Sheinwald reportedly stressed that the King must reverse his actions of February 1, or it would be difficult for HMG to change its policy against military aid.

Transit to Afghanistan

15. (C) Sheinwald underlined to Saran the UK hope that India will attend the Wilton Park conference on Afghanistan, encouraged India's presence at the June 22 donors conference, and asked whether India might do more on counternarcotics. Saran asked the Brits to help India get transit rights through Pakistan to Afghanistan, at least for assistance-related items. He also indicated that India had raised this issue bilaterally with Musharraf. Saran was predictably skeptical on Taliban reintegration, warning that Pakistan was pushing for this in order to rebuild influence.

Narayanan More Troubled by Bangladesh Than Nepal

16. (C) Narayanan reportedly told Sheinwald that a trilateral approach with the United States, UK and India was even more desirable regarding Bangladesh, where "Talebanization is a real possibility" and radical Islam could take root and become an "epicenter of terrorism." Almost all Indian insurgent groups had links to Bangladesh, the Indian NSA asserted. New Delhi believes it has shown considerable restraint in the Tripura region after several recent incidents involving border forces, but had yet to see a commensurate response from Bangladesh. Sheinwald responded that HMG was monitoring the situation closely and welcomed specific information on terrorism, regardless of the channel.

Indians Pleased About China

17. (C) Offering an upbeat account of New Delhi's relationship with China, Saran was pleased that China had formally recognized Sikkim as part of India during Premier Wen's recent visit. The GOI believes it scored a victory when the PRC agreed not to disturb "settled populations," a reference to the "Guiding Principles" the two sides signed governing their approach to resolving the disputed border. The PM was also pleased with India's progress with Beijing, especially the parameters for resolving their border question. Asked for his assessment of U.S. policy, Saran remarked that the U.S. did not appear to be pursuing a containment strategy towards China, but was concerned about China not playing by the rules. The PM evinced interest in China's friction with Japan.

September Visit

18. (C) Macaire noted that the British PM's anticipated visit to New Delhi on September 7-8 will come on the heels of an unprecedented number of trips to India by almost every UK Cabinet Minister. He hoped that India could be convinced through the UK Presidency to view the EU as "more than just a trading partner." In addition to leading the EU Summit, the UK Prime Minister's visit will include a full day of bilateral business in New Delhi.

19. (U) Minimize considered.

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